



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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FALL WATERFOWL MIGRATIONS PROJECTED; HUNTING REGULATIONS PROPOSED

With duck populations remaining near all-time lows, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed to continue restrictive hunting regulations this fall, Service Director John Turner announced today.

The Service has projected a fall flight index of 64 million ducks, about the same as last year and the third lowest figure since the Service began making such projections in 1969. The fall flight index is based on surveys of duck breeding populations, estimated at 31.3 million this year, and estimates of brood production rates.

Duck numbers fell to record lows during the 1980's as a result of severe drought in prairie nesting areas and continued destruction of wetlands across the continent. Geese, which nest farther north, have generally fared better than ducks during the past decade.

Numbers of most Canada goose populations migrating south this fall are expected to be similar to last year. The eastern prairie population, which winters near Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri, is expected to have a record-high fall flight. Giant Canada geese are continuing to do well and are expected to have a larger fall flight than last year. Numbers of dusky Canada geese, lesser Canada geese, and cackling Canada geese are expected to increase somewhat this fall.

Numbers of greater white-fronted geese are expected to increase in the Pacific Flyway. Numbers of eastern mid-continent white fronts (wintering mostly in Louisiana) are expected to be similar to last year, while the western segment of the population (wintering along the Texas coast) is expected to increase over last year.

The fall flight of lesser snow geese is expected to be similar to or slightly lower than last year. Numbers of greater snow geese, Ross' geese, and brant are expected to remain about the same as last year. Numbers of tundra swans are expected to be greater than last year in the West, and equal to or greater than last year in the East.

Proposed hunting regulations for ducks are the same as last year, with shooting hours from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. The proposed daily bag limit is three in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways and four in the Pacific Flyway. Proposed season lengths are 30 days in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways; 39 days in the Low Plains Unit of the Central Flyway and 51 days in the High Plains Unit; and 59 days in the Pacific Flyway (66 days in the Columbia Basin Unit). The season on canvasbacks is closed except in the Pacific Flyway, where there is a proposed bag limit of two canvasbacks, compared to one canvasback last year. As last year, a point system option that is at least as restrictive as the conventional bag limit is offered in the Mississippi and Central Flyways. In the Central Flyway, an additional daily bag of five mergansers (only one of which may be a hooded merganser), is offered under the conventional bag limit option.

Proposed goose hunting seasons also are similar to last year. In the Atlantic Flyway, proposed changes from last year include extending the season in the Massachusetts Central Zone from January 20 to 31; permitting a split in the special 8-day season in Georgia and increasing the quota from 1,150 to 2,280; and extending the white goose season from 90 to 107 days and the closing framework date from January 31 to February 10.

In the Mississippi Flyway, the white goose closing framework is proposed for extension to February 14; there is a proposed 9-day experimental Canada goose season in Louisiana; and there are proposed restrictions for Tennessee Valley population geese and liberalizations for Mississippi Valley population and Eastern Prairie population geese.

In eastern Central Flyway states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, eastern Texas) a white goose option of 100 days with five geese or 86 days with seven geese is offered. There are proposed liberalizations for goose seasons in the western states (Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, western Texas).

In the Pacific Flyway, the season length is proposed for increase from 88 to 93 days for Rocky Mountain population geese, and there are proposed modifications for California goose closure zones.

Details of the proposed regulations were published in the August 17 Federal Register. Public comments are requested by August 27 and should be addressed to the Director (MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, 634 Arlington Square, Washington, DC 20240.



FISH & WILDLIFE

Facts

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1990-91 PROPOSED WATERFOWL HUNTING REGULATIONS - SUMMARY

The following is a summary of proposed waterfowl hunting regulations for 1990-91. It does not reflect many local exceptions and variations in hunting regulations and should not be used by hunters in place of complete hunting regulations. More information about proposed regulations is contained in the August 17 Federal Register.

ATLANTIC FLYWAY:

Ducks: Hunting season of 30 days between October 6 and January 6. The daily bag limit is 3 and may include no more than 1 hen mallard, 2 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 1 black duck, 1 mottled duck, 1 pintail, and 1 fulvous tree duck. Possession limit is twice the daily bag limit. Season closed on canvasbacks and harlequin ducks.

Geese: For Canada geese, a 90-day season is proposed between October 1 and January 31 in Connecticut (North Zone), New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania (Southeast Zone) and Rhode Island; closing date of February 5 in the South Zone of Connecticut; bag limits vary by date and location. In Delaware, Maryland, and most of Virginia, a 60-day season with a bag limit of 2 between October 31 and January 20. In Maine, most of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, most of Pennsylvania, Vermont, and West Virginia, a 70-day season between October 1 and January 20 with a bag limit of 3 in most areas (closing date of January 31 in Massachusetts' Central Zone); some variations of date and bag limit by hunting zone. In Massachusetts, a special resident Canada goose season may be held in the Coastal Zone during January 21 to February 5 with a daily bag limit of 5. An 11-day season is proposed in North Carolina (east of I-95), South Carolina, and Virginia's Back Bay from January 20-31, with a bag limit of 1. Canada goose season closed in Florida and in North

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Carolina west of I-95. For white geese (lesser snow, including blue, geese, greater snow geese, and Ross' geese), a 107-day season between October 1 and February 10 with daily bag and possession limits of 5 and 10. For Atlantic brant, 50-day season between October 1 and January 20 with daily bag and possession limits of 2 and 4.

Swans: An experimental 90-day season for tundra swans, concurrent with the white goose season, in New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia. Permits will be issued by States authorizing each permittee to take no more than 1 tundra swan per season; permits limited to 200 in New Jersey, 6,000 in North Carolina, and 600 in Virginia. States must obtain harvest and hunter participation data.

MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY:

Ducks: 30 days between October 6 and January 6. Daily bag limit of 3, with no more than 2 mallards (only 1 hen), 1 black duck, 1 pintail, 2 wood ducks, and 1 redhead. Possession limit is twice the daily bag limit. A point system option is offered, with the following point values: 100 points -- hen mallard, pintail, black duck, redhead, hooded merganser; 50 points - male mallard, wood duck; 35 points - all other ducks and mergansers. Season closed on canvasbacks.

Geese: For dark geese (Canada, white-fronted geese, and brant), a 70-day season from September 29-January 20, except in Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama where the closing date is January 31; and for light geese (lesser snow, including blue, geese, greater snow geese, and Ross' geese) an 80-day season between September 29 and February 14. Daily bag limit is 7, to include no more than 3 Canada and 2 white-fronted geese. Many local variations for Canada geese.

CENTRAL FLYWAY

Ducks: From October 6 through January 6, a 39-day season in the Low Plains Unit and a 51-day season in the High Plains Unit (roughly west of the 100th meridian). Daily bag limit is 3, to include no more than 2 mallards (only 1 hen), 1 mottled duck, 1 pintail, 1 redhead, and 2 wood ducks. Alternatively, a point system as follows: 100 points - hen mallard, pintail, redhead, hooded merganser, mottled duck; 50 points - drake mallard, wood duck; 35 points -- all other ducks and mergansers. Season closed on canvasbacks. Under the conventional bag limit option, an additional daily bag of 5 mergansers may be taken, only 1 of which may be a hooded merganser.

Geese: From September 29 through January 20 for dark geese; from September 29 through February 17 (February 28 in New Mexico) for light geese. Numerous state and local variations in season lengths and bag limits.

Swans: A tundra swan season is proposed for Montana (500 permits); North Dakota (1,000 permits); and South Dakota (500 permits).

PACIFIC FLYWAY

Ducks: 59-day season between October 6 and January 6, with a daily bag limit of 4 including no more than 3 mallards (only 1 hen), 1 pintail, and either 2 canvasbacks, 2 redheads, or 1 of each. In the Columbia Basin mallard management unit, the season may be an additional 7 days.

Geese: 93-day season between September 29 and January 20, with a daily bag limit of 6 geese, including no more than 3 white geese and 3 dark geese. In California, Oregon, and Washington only, limits for brant are 2 per day and 4 in possession and additional to dark goose limits, and the open season on brant in those States may differ from that for other geese. Season closed on Aleutian Canada geese throughout the Pacific Flyway and cackling Canada geese in California, Oregon, and Washington. Many local variations in seasons and limits.

Tundra swans: A 93-day season between September 30 and January 20, with permits limited to 2,500 in Utah, 650 in Nevada, and 500 in Pacific Flyway portions of Montana.

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